



NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 16, 2007

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BREDESEN LAUNCHES MENTORING PROGRAM FOR TEENS IN FOSTER CARE

INITIATIVE WILL PROVIDE ADULT MENTORS TO HELP TEENS PREPARE FOR TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Nashville - Governor Phil Bredesen today unveiled a new statewide mentoring initiative that pairs volunteer mentors with teenage children in foster care. The Governor's mentoring program will provide young people in state custody with a positive, adult influence to help support them in making the right decisions as they grow toward adulthood.

The statewide initiative was launched today during a Martin Luther King Day observance event in Nashville with Governor Bredesen, First Lady Andrea Conte, Department of Children's Services Commissioner Viola Miller, and former Congressman Harold Ford, Jr. The mentoring program will be operated through the Governor's Children's Cabinet.

"Helping teenagers in foster homes prepare for the transition to adult responsibilities is a critical investment in our youth," said Governor Bredesen. "A fundamental part of Dr. King's vision was to ensure that all children, regardless of race or class, be provided the same opportunities to succeed in life. This program will go a long way in advancing that vision."

The Children's Cabinet will work with private organizations and individuals to pair volunteer mentors with early teenage children who are currently in Tennessee's foster care system. The program is voluntary for the youth and will include optional mentor support groups and resources for mentors.

Volunteer mentors will be asked to serve as a positive role model and friend through an ongoing, one-on-one relationship. Mentors will help teens set and meet goals and provide motivation and guidance to help achieve those goals. Mentors agree to spend four to six hours per month with the young person with whom they are paired.

The Governor's Children's Cabinet was created in March 2003 to coordinate and streamline the state's efforts to provide needed services to Tennessee's children, including those inside and outside of state custody. The Cabinet includes the Commissioners of Children's Services, Education, Health, Human Services, Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Executive Director of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth and six citizens, including First Lady Conte, appointed by the Governor who are involved in issues affecting Tennessee's children.

Adult Tennesseans interested in becoming a mentor must commit to taking a mentoring training class and pass a mandatory background check. Individuals interested in applying to be a mentor can call 1-866-519-LIFT (5438) to receive an application.

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